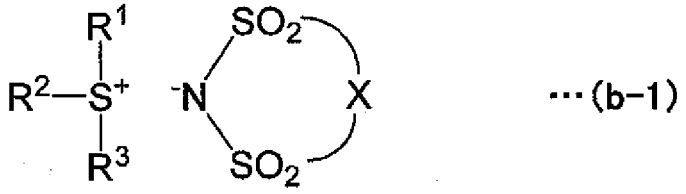
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (**Currently amended**) A resist composition comprising a resin component (A) that undergoes a change in alkali solubility in the presence of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein

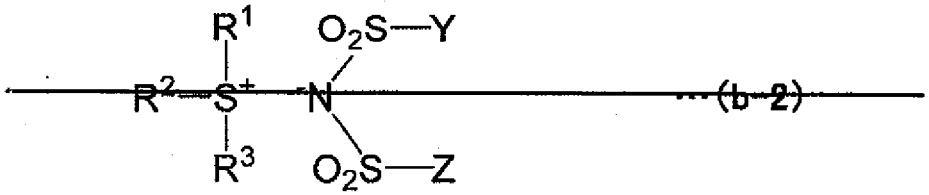
said resin component (A) has a weight average molecular weight of no more than 8,000 and comprises structural units (a) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester; and

said component (B) comprises ~~at least one~~ a sulfonium compound represented by a general formula (b-1) ~~or a general formula (b-2)~~ shown below:

[Formula 1]



…(b-1)



…(b-2)

[wherein, X represents an alkylene group of 2 to 6 carbon atoms in which at least one hydrogen atom has been substituted with a fluorine atom; ~~Y and Z each represent, independently, an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms in which at least one hydrogen atom has been substituted with a fluorine atom;~~ R^1 to R^3 each represent, independently, an aryl group or an alkyl group, and at least one of R^1 to R^3 represents an aryl group].

2. (**Previously presented**) A resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said component (B) further comprises an onium salt-based acid generator comprising a straight-chain fluorinated alkylsulfonate anion of 1 to 7 carbon atoms.

3. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said structural units (a) comprise structural units (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group.

4. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 3, wherein said structural units (a) further comprise structural units (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a lactone-containing monocyclic or polycyclic group.

5. **(Previously presented)** A resist composition according to claim 3, wherein said structural units (a) further comprise structural units (a3) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a polar group-containing aliphatic hydrocarbon group.

6. **(Original)** A resist composition according to claim 1, further comprising a nitrogen-containing organic compound.

7. **(Previously presented)** A method for forming a resist pattern, comprising the steps of forming a resist film on a substrate using a resist composition according to claim 1; conducting selective exposure treatment of said resist film; and alkali developing said resist film to form said resist pattern.

8. **(Canceled)**

9. **(New)** A resist composition comprising a resin component (A) that undergoes a change in alkali solubility in the presence of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein:

said resin component (A) has a weight average molecular weight of no more than 7,500 and comprises structural units (a) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester,

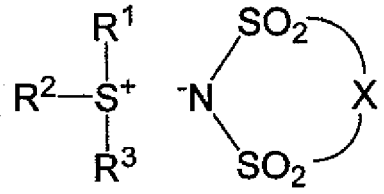
wherein said structural units (a) comprise structural units (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester containing an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group,

structural units (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a lactone-containing monocyclic or polycyclic group, and

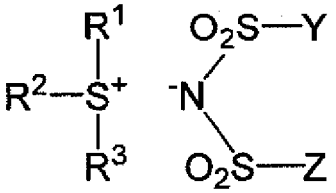
structural units (a3) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a hydroxyl group-containing aliphatic hydrocarbon group; and wherein

said component (B) comprises at least one sulfonium compound represented by a general formula (b-1) or a general formula (b-2) shown below:

[Formula 1]



··· (b-1)



··· (b-2)

[wherein, X represents an alkylene group of 2 to 6 carbon atoms in which at least one hydrogen atom has been substituted with a fluorine atom; Y and Z each represents, independently, an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms in which at least one hydrogen atom has been substituted with a fluorine atom; R^1 to R^3 each represents, independently, an aryl group or an alkyl group, and at least one of R^1 to R^3 represents an aryl group].

10. (**New**) A resist composition according to claim 9, wherein said component (B) further comprises an onium salt-based acid generator comprising a straight-chain fluorinated alkylsulfonate anion of 1 to 7 carbon atoms.

11. (**New**) A resist composition according to claim 9, further comprising a nitrogen-containing organic compound.

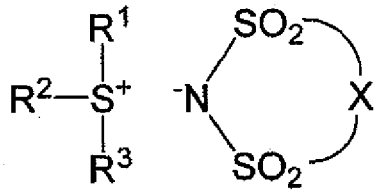
12. (**New**) A method for forming a resist pattern, comprising the steps of forming a resist film on a substrate using a resist composition according to claim 9; conducting selective exposure treatment of said resist film; and alkali developing said resist film to form said resist pattern.

13. (New) A resist composition, comprising a resin component (A) that undergoes a change in alkali solubility in the presence of acid, and an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, wherein

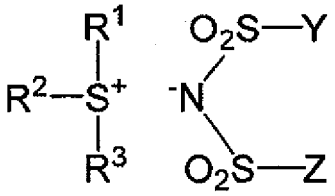
said resin component (A) has a weight average molecular weight of no more than 8,000 and comprises structural units (a) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester;

said component (B) comprises at least one sulfonium compound represented by a general formula (b-1) or a general formula (b-2) shown below:

[Formula 1]



···(b-1)



···(b-2)

[wherein, X represents an alkylene group of 2 to 6 carbon atoms in which at least one hydrogen atom has been substituted with a fluorine atom; Y and Z each represents, independently, an alkyl group of 1 to 10 carbon atoms in which at least one hydrogen atom has been substituted with a fluorine atom; R^1 to R^3 each represents, independently, an aryl group or an alkyl group, and at least one of R^1 to R^3 represents an aryl group]; and

an onium salt-based acid generator comprising a straight-chain fluorinated alkylsulfonate anion of 1 to 7 carbon atoms, wherein the blend ratio (weight ratio) between the onium salt-based acid generator and the one or more compounds selected from the sulfonium compounds is within a range from 1:9 to 9:1.

14. (New) A resist composition according to claim 13, wherein said structural units (a) comprise structural units (a1) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group.

15. (**New**) A resist composition according to claim 14, wherein said structural units (a) further comprise structural units (a2) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a lactone-containing monocyclic or polycyclic group.

16. (**New**) A resist composition according to claim 14, wherein said structural units (a) further comprise structural units (a3) derived from a (meth)acrylate ester comprising a polar group-containing aliphatic hydrocarbon group.

17. (**New**) A resist composition according to claim 13, further comprising a nitrogen-containing organic compound.

18. (**New**) A method for forming a resist pattern, comprising the steps of forming a resist film on a substrate using a resist composition according to claim 13; conducting selective exposure treatment of said resist film; and alkali developing said resist film to form said resist pattern.